

THE FREEDOM OF

MOVEMENT

FOR BLIND CHILDREN

A MANUAL FOR TEACHERS OF BLIND CHILDREN

ORIENTATION

AND

MOBILITY

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HOUSE FOR THE BLIND**

This Manual is designed to assist the teachers who have blind children in their classes in meeting the orientation and mobility needs of these children. The Mecklenburg Association for the Blind, in February, 1964, sponsored a series of Workshops for Parents and Teachers of Blind Children. The purpose of these Workshops was to promote an understanding of Mobility Training Programs, steps that can be taken now to insure the child's readiness for formalized travel training, and what the future holds for the blind child in terms of mobility. The thoughts and techniques discussed in the following pages are products of the parent-teacher discussions in these Workshops.

The teacher plays an important role in the development of the blind child. Her attitudes concerning the many difficulties to be faced and overcome by a blind person, right or wrong, are transmitted to the blind student. Those children who can see, rely on their teacher to develop their own attitudes toward their blind classmates. A good teacher teaches children, blind or sighted. As she has the responsibility to do her part to insure the proper development of the sighted child, so has she the same responsibility toward the blind child. Experience in the Mecklenburg Schools and elsewhere has proved, that a capable teacher, using the skills developed through training and experience, can fulfill this responsibility.

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THE IMPORTANCE OF MOBILITY

One of the basic rights of every human being is freedom. To all children, blind or sighted, the ability to go where they want when they want to go means freedom. This freedom has a very important developmental effect on all children, for the child is given the opportunity to explore, examine and assimilate the knowledge that his environment gives him. This freedom to explore the environment and utilize the knowledge it gives is essential to all children, even those with little or no vision.

Mobility is the possession or use of travel skills for independent movement. It involves safe, graceful travel, as well as a psychological movement of attitudes and ideas. The capacity for independent travel means freedom to a blind person. His movement is not restricted by his disability. His family is secure in the knowledge that the blind person can leave the house under his own power, conduct his business, and return to them safely. Independent travel opens avenues to social, emotional and vocational fulfillment.

READINESS FOR MOBILITY

If the blind child is to be emotionally and physically able for mobility, the teacher must play her part along with the resource teacher and the parents. The world of a blind child consists mainly of his home and school, and in order for this environment to have a positive effect on the child, parents and teachers need to work together.

The most readily accessible resource to the classroom teacher is the resource teacher. The resource teacher is a specialist made available to help the classroom teacher and to provide specialized instruction.

Another resource deserving of special recognition is parents of blind children. It is necessary to remember that a blind child is a member of a family. Dr. James L. Hynes, Jr., in his book, "Effective Home-School Relations", reminds educators that, "Parents are in love with their children; parents want to keep in touch with their children; parents want to participate; and parents have much to give".

The emotional and physical readiness of the blind child for mobility depends on the careful planning and close cooperation of the classroom teacher, the resource teacher, and the parents. For this reason, it is recommended that regularly scheduled conferences be held, to insure careful planning for the child and a team awareness of what each member is doing.

RESOURCE TEACHER

The resource teacher, as a specialist, is responsible for teaching the child basic orientation techniques. Such techniques should include, proper use of a human guide, method of trailing a wall-line, the use of fixed-direction takers, and methods of protection from high and low objects.

CLASSROOM TEACHER

The classroom teacher is responsible for orienting the child to her classroom and for reinforcing the basic orientation techniques taught by the resource teacher.



The resource teacher, classroom teacher, and parents, form a team in planning the education of a blind child. They work closely together to insure the emotional and physical readiness of the blind child for travel.

IMPLEMENTING CLASSROOM RESPONSIBILITY

The first responsibility of the classroom teacher is to know who the child is. With the resource teacher she should rationally assess the individual characteristics of each blind child. Mobility depends on planning for each child rather than a general formula for all blind children.

Secondly, the teacher should introduce the child to the classroom. This is generally called familiarization to the classroom. Familiarization of the blind child to his classroom is an essential and difficult task. For this reason, it is recommended, that any teacher who is to have a blind child in her class, meet with this child and his parents the day before school officially opens, so that the child's familiarization to the room can be effected early when the teacher has ample time. This gives the blind child a good head start in gaining the information he needs about his surroundings, as well as freeing the teacher's time on opening day, so that she may devote her time to the entire class, and not to one child.

The first step in this familiarization process is the child being shown his permanent desk in the room. This will be his point of reference within the classroom. He might then be shown the teacher's desk, and its location in the room in relation to his own desk. The door is then shown to the child

Applicant's name Ronald I. Jackson (Mr. & Mrs. R. L.) Sex M Race W
(Parent's name if child)

Date of birth 4/26/54 Age at onset of blindness Right eye birth Left eye birth

Describe appearance of eyes, including fundi: _____

Without Glasses		With Old Glasses		Refraction Check type: (Cycloplegic) (Manifest)				Prescription			Visual Acuity Upon Discharge	
				Sphere	Cylinder	Axis		Sphere	Cylinder	Axis	Rt.	Lt.
Rt. Eye	<u>20/80-</u>	Rt. Eye		R			A	R			Rt. Eye	<u>20/80-</u>
Lt. Eye	<u>20/60-</u>	Lt. Eye		L			A	L			Lt. Eye	<u>20/60-</u>

Is there any limitation in field of vision? No _____ Yes X

Record degree of limitation: Right eye 5 Left eye 5

Etiology of eye condition: Brain tumor-operated-resultant loss of some peripheral vision.

Prognosis: Is there any likelihood that vision could be restored? None

Recommendations: Treatment—specify type and indicate length of time

Remarks: Glasses not indicated.

Date of examination 3/10/51 When should patient be re-examined? _____

(Signature of examining physician) _____ (Address of examining physician) _____

Data below to be filled out by State Supervising Ophthalmologist for Eligibility for A. B. Payment

- (1) I do approve _____ do not approve _____ for AB Payment on basis of vision _____
- (2) I recommend re-examination to determine continuing eligibility _____ (Date) _____

(Signature of Supervising Ophthalmologist)

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and its relative position from his desk. Windows and bookcases may also be pointed out, as well as the number of rows of desks in the room and the number of desks in each row. The bathroom and location of the pencil sharpener should also be pointed out. In each case, the child should be taken over the route from his desk to each objective and then be given the opportunity to traverse this route again by himself. As one can readily see, a familiarization program of this nature takes time. However, we must remember that we are dealing with the future of this blind child, and by giving him these necessary experiences now, we are aiding in his proper development toward becoming a self-sustaining, independent, dignified, valuable member of society. With this familiarization, this child will still make mistakes in locating things. However, he must be allowed to make these errors, experience and correct them, in order to obtain the maximum effectiveness within his environment.

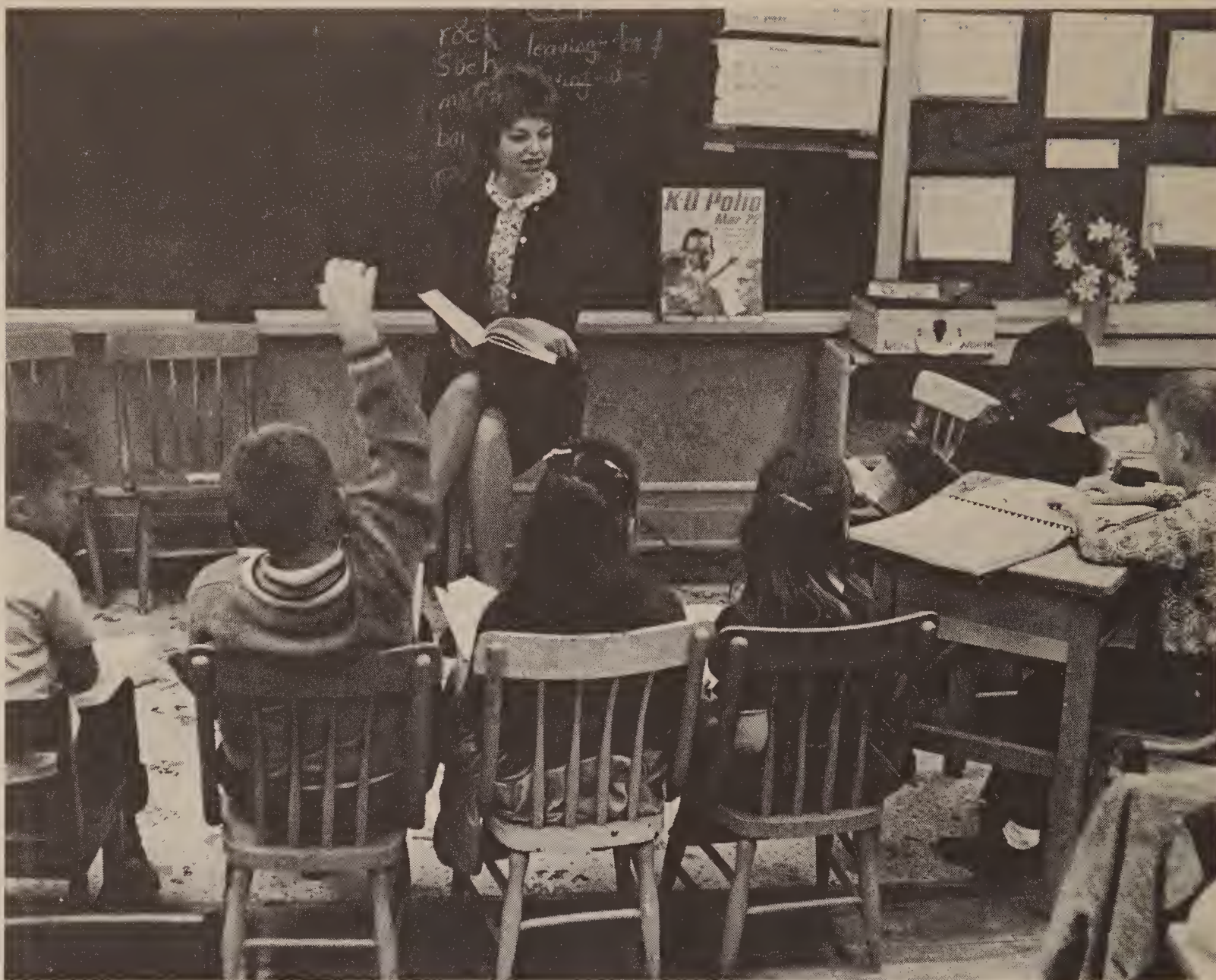
The classroom teacher should expect the child to employ, and help him use the orientation techniques taught by the resource teacher. Each teacher that the blind child has will in some way be a teacher of mobility and orientation, and, as such, should reinforce proper travel techniques and discourage improper procedures. The blind child receives his information from his remaining senses, and must be given the opportunity to use these senses. If he is to be in your classroom, he must be a member of the class, and be given the opportunity to experience classroom success and failure.

DIRECTIONS

From the classroom, it will be necessary for the blind child to travel to other parts of the school building and grounds. To do this he will need to be given proper directions. The functions of the teacher here will be to interpret her visual clues into directions that will be meaningful to the remaining senses of the blind child. When giving directions to the blind child, they must be clear, accurate, and concise. The directions given to the blind child must give him a general picture of the route to be traveled, without the clutter of unnecessary and unmeaningful details. If the direction to be given is a left turn, then it must be given as "left turn", always thinking in terms of the blind child's left or right. He must be told how many turns and the direction of each turn that he will have to make to locate his objective. After giving a blind child directions, it is also favorable to have him repeat them, because language experts tell us that we learn more permanently concepts that we are required to know intellectually and verbally. The following are examples of good and bad directions.

Good: Teacher to child, "Go out of the door turn right, trail the wall to the first opening, turn right, proceed to the stairs and go up two flights of stairs, turn right, follow wall-line to the third opening, turn right and go through the opening and you are in the library. Turn left and you will find the librarian's desk."

Bad: Teacher to child, "Go out the door and around to the stairs, go up the stairs and the library will be on your right."



The blind child needs to know the arrangement of the classroom and various key points in the classroom, in relation to his position in the room.

WHERE TO GO TO OBTAIN ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The Mecklenburg Association of the Blind maintains a program for blind children. The Association staff consists of professionally trained personnel in the field of Work for the Blind, among which is a professional mobility instructor. Consultation for teachers and families of blind children is available from the Association.



With everyone doing their part, the blind child is now capable of moving about the school building safely and confidently.

DIALOGUE: THE CHILD AND HIS TEACHER

The world is big. I am small. How can I understand it? How can I find a place in it? What is expected of me? Am I a child? Or, am I a blind child?

Teacher knows. She believes I have a place. She believes I am important. She believes I am a child.

In believing, she helps me believe.

FOR FURTHER READING

A BLIND CHILD BECOMES A MEMBER OF YOUR CLASS by Ysabel Johnson. Available from the American Foundation for the Blind, 15 W. 16th St., New York 11, N. Y.

RESOURCES FOR TEACHERS OF BLIND WITH SIGHTED CHILDREN compiled by Georgie Lee Abel. Available from the American Foundation for the Blind, 15 W. 16th St., New York 11, N. Y.

HELPING THE VISUALLY HANDICAPPED CHILD IN A REGULAR CLASS by Anthony J. Pelone. Available from the Bureau of Publications, Teacher's College, Columbia University.

PARTIALLY SIGHTED AND BLIND CHILDREN compiled by The Department of Special Education, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, and the Mecklenburg County Association for the Blind, Inc.

VOCABULARY OF TERMS RELATING TO THE EYE, compiled by The National Society for the Prevention of Blindness, Inc., New York 19, N. Y.

These and other materials are available on loan from the Mecklenburg Association for the Blind.

This booklet was compiled by the Mecklenburg Association for the Blind to assist teachers in understanding and meeting the Orientation and Mobility needs of the blind child and to acquaint teachers with the work of the Association.

Mecklenburg Association for the Blind, Inc.

704 Louise Avenue

Charlotte, North Carolina

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Mechlenburg Assoc. f/t blind.

The freedom of movement for
blind children.

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